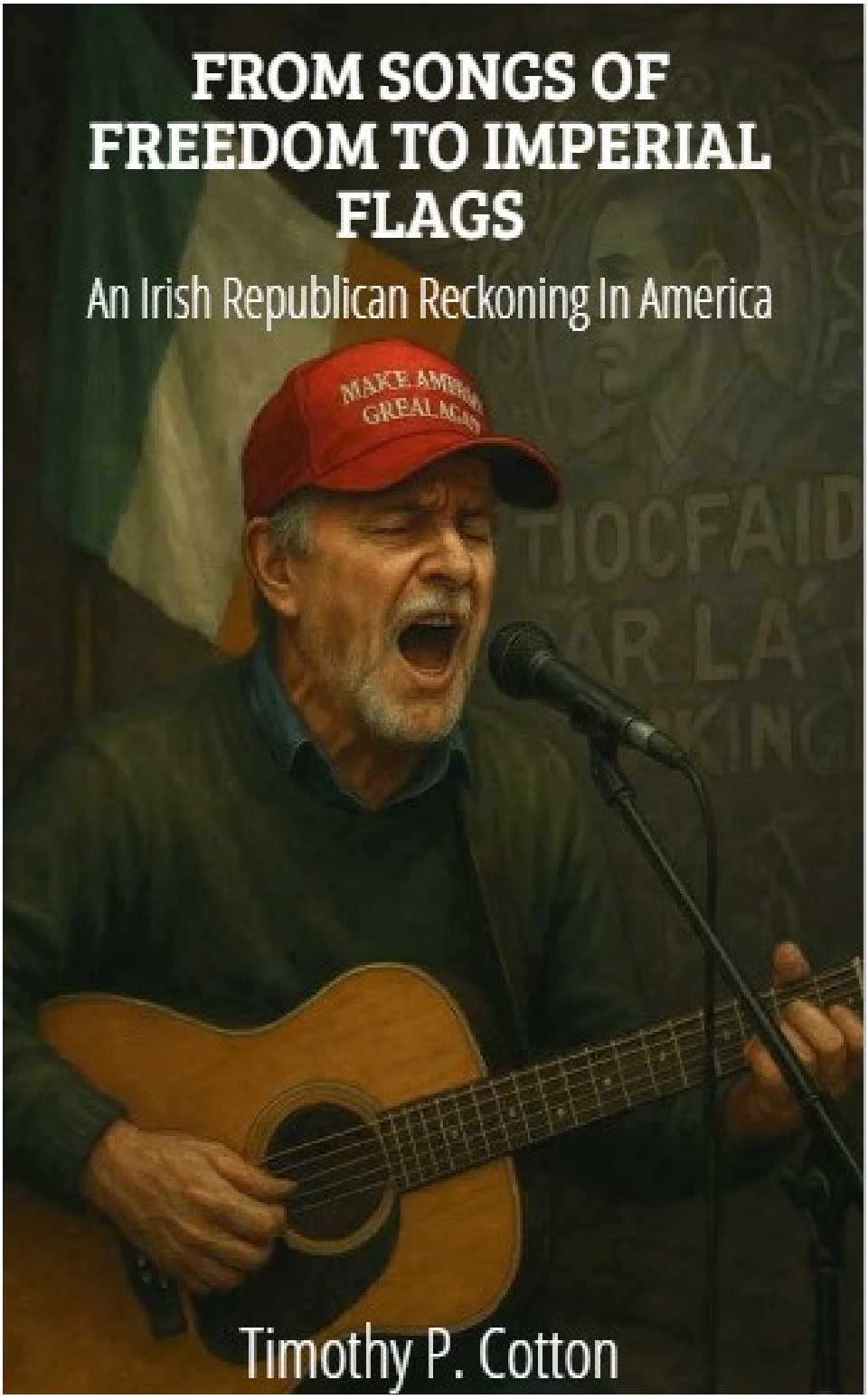
# FROM SONGS OF FREEDOM TO IMPERIAL FLAGS

## An Irish Republican Reckoning In America




Timothy P. Cotton

# From Songs of Freedom to Imperial Flags

## An Irish Republican Reckoning in America

Timothy P. Cotton

Copyright © 2025 Timothy P. Cotton

www.truthandway.org

This book was written to be used, shared, and passed along. You may copy it, quote it, or hand out the entire work without permission- so long as you do not change the text and that you give credit to the author.
The struggle is bigger than one person's name on a cover. Spread it freely, but keep it true.
For translations, adaptations, or any use for profit, contact the author.

Partial rights reserved.

ISBN: 9798297261488

# DEDICATION

To all of the men and women who have sung the songs, marched the roads, borne the scars, and paid the price-

To those who gave their youth, their liberty, and in too many cases, their lives- for the cause of Irish freedom-

Whether on the streets of Belfast or Derry, New York or Boston; in the jails of Long Kesh or under the watchful eyes of federal agencies; in the halls of Congress, in quiet homes or loud protests-

This booklet is for you

May your courage never be forgotten, and may your dreams never be betrayed.

I also wish to dedicate this to my wife Christine who was been by my side for decades in the cause of Irish Freedom,
as well as my son Brian Liam, who keeps the torches lit with the fires of Irish freedom.

*"Thug siad a saol ar son saoirse na hÉireann"*

# CONTENTS


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Acknowledgments | i |
| | Intro | 1 |
| 1 | Exiles, Not Immigrants; Irish America's Revolutionary Roots | 3 |
| 2 | Becoming White: The Cost of American Belonging | 6 |
| 3 | The Great Betrayal: Trumpism and the Irish-American Conscience | 10 |
| 4 | Between Connolly and Constantine: Christianity's Fork in the Road | 14 |
| 5 | Memory as Resistance: The Politics of Remembering | 17 |
| 6 | A Way Forward: Repentance, Solidarity, and Revolutionary Faith | 20 |
| 7 | Conclusion: A Fire That Cannot Be Quenched | 22 |

# Introduction

The Irish came to America not in triumph but in trauma—driven from a land scarred by colonization, genocide, famine, and foreign rule. They arrived not as settlers but as exiles, many with little more than memory, language, and rebellion clinging to their bones. Theirs was a history sung in the cadences of resistance and sorrow: the ballads of 1798, the poetry of Pearse and Connolly, and the whispered prayers of hunger strikers dying in Long Kesh. Irish Republicanism, forged in the crucible of empire, taught generations to distrust power, to side with the oppressed, and to hope fiercely against hope.

Yet in America—a land that welcomed the Irish with one hand and beat them down with the other—something began to change. Over time, the songs of freedom grew fainter. A people who once saw empire as the enemy came to serve it. Irish surnames filled the ranks of American police forces, political machines, and military institutions. In the 21st century, many descendants of Irish Republicans found themselves pledging allegiance not to justice or liberation but to Donald Trump and the machinery of American nationalism. In a final irony, those who once raised money for the IRA now wave the flags of authoritarian populism and “law and order” repression.

This booklet is a reckoning with that transformation. It asks how the children of rebels became defenders of empire. It explores how assimilation into whiteness and American civil religion severed Irish-Americans from the very history that gave them moral clarity. And it grieves the theological betrayal of a people whose faith was once rooted in solidarity and is now too often aligned with power.

I write this not as an outsider but as one shaped by the Irish Republican tradition. My family's story is steeped in the struggles of the War for Independence and the subsequent civil war. I have worked with Irish Northern Aid, Sinn Féin, and am a member of the Irish American Unity Conference. I have walked with ex-prisoners and peace builders, and sung the old songs in American cities where the diaspora once remembered what it meant to resist. Today, I watch with heartbreak as that memory fades—not from age, but from compromise.

But this is not only a lament. It is also a call—to repentance, to remembrance, and to resurrection. Drawing on historical memory, liberation theology, and the prophetic voice of Irish resistance, this booklet seeks to recover a different kind of Irish-America. One that stands again with the oppressed. One that refuses empire. One that remembers who we are.

# I. Exiles, Not Immigrants: Irish America’s Revolutionary Roots

To understand the moral drift of Irish-America, we must begin with how it began—not with opportunity, but with trauma. The Irish did not come to the United States simply as immigrants seeking a better life; they came as exiles driven from their homeland by centuries of conquest, starvation, and systemic violence. Their departure was less a choice than a survival strategy, and their arrival in America was not a clean slate but a continuation of struggle. The coffin ships that brought them across the Atlantic were not vessels of hope, but floating tombs carrying the grief of an occupied people.

Irish Republicanism was born in this crucible of oppression. From the failed rebellion of the United Irishmen in 1798 to the Easter Rising of 1916, and through the long years of guerilla warfare and prison resistance in the north of Ireland, Irish nationalism evolved as a radical critique of empire. It was never merely about national pride or ethnic identity—it was, at its best, a revolutionary solidarity with all those who suffered under foreign domination. Its heroes were not only patriots, but prophets. The very language of the movement—“the cause,” “the struggle,” “the fight for freedom”—echoed with theological overtones,

rooted in the belief that justice was not only a political demand but a sacred one.

That tradition came across the Atlantic with those who fled starvation and repression. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Irish communities in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago became key hubs of revolutionary support. Organizations like Clann na Gael, Irish Northern Aid, and later Friends of Sinn Féin mobilized funds, organized demonstrations, and lobbied U.S. politicians to pressure the British government. These were not symbolic gestures. American dollars helped fund arms shipments. Diaspora lawyers represented Republican prisoners. Irish bars and union halls became nodes in a global network of resistance.

Even within the Irish-American church—often accused of conservatism—there were priests and nuns who quietly supported the movement, offering spiritual and material aid to families affected by British violence. In the context of U.S. civil rights, many Irish-Americans at the time identified with other oppressed peoples, particularly Black Americans and anti-colonial struggles around the world. Solidarity, not supremacy, defined the Irish diasporic conscience in its more faithful expressions.

This identification with the oppressed, however, was fragile—and increasingly compromised by the material rewards offered by the American system.

As Irish immigrants climbed the social ladder, their revolutionary memory dimmed. The more they gained access to whiteness, property, and political office, the more they were tempted to trade solidarity for security.

But to forget their own history is to betray it. For Irish Republicanism was never simply a matter of blood or land. It was about resistance to empire in all its forms. James Connolly, the labor leader executed after the Easter Rising, insisted that Irish liberation was meaningless if it did not include economic justice for the working class. His vision of a free Ireland was not an ethnic enclave, but a society rooted in equality and dignity for all. Bobby Sands, who died on hunger strike in 1981, wrote not only of Irish freedom, but of global liberation. “Our revenge,” he famously wrote, “will be the laughter of our children.”

The Irish in America were once keepers of this revolutionary fire. The question now is whether they can rekindle it—or whether they will continue to smother it beneath the silence of empire.

## II. Becoming White: The Price of American Belonging

The transformation of the Irish in America from marginalized outsiders to agents of empire was neither accidental nor benign. It was the result of a social transaction—one that traded historical memory and revolutionary solidarity for the privileges of whiteness. In becoming American, many Irish-Americans became something far more consequential: white. And with that shift came a moral rupture.

When Irish immigrants first arrived in the United States in large numbers during the 19th century, they were not welcomed as full members of society. They were vilified as drunken, violent, superstitious Catholics—racialized as not fully white in the Anglo-Protestant imagination. They were caricatured in the press as simian and subhuman, denied access to skilled labor, and ghettoized in urban slums. “No Irish Need Apply” signs were common, and anti-Catholic nativist movements such as the Know-Nothings targeted Irish churches and schools with violence and legislation alike.

One of the lesser-known but most telling episodes in the history of Irish immigrants in America occurred during the Mexican-American War. Many of them joined the U.S. Army seeking opportunity or citizenship, only to face anti-Irish

bigotry and harsh treatment from Protestant officers.

Witnessing the brutal invasion of a Catholic nation, and identifying with the suffering of the Mexican people caused by an imperial force, a group of Irish soldiers led by John Riley joined the Mexican army. They became known as the St. Patrick's Battalion (El Batalíon de San Patricio) and fought bravely against their former comrades. These men were ultimately captured, many to be executed publicly. In Mexico, however, they remain honored today as heroes who stood up for faith and conscience over blind allegiance to empire. Their defection is more than a footnote; it is a symbol of how early Irish immigrants, even before finding their footing in America could recognize and resist the violent logic of empire-not out of disloyalty, but out of solidarity with the oppressed.

But the racial structure of American society offered a pathway to conditional acceptance. As theorist Noel Ignatiev argued in *How the Irish Became White*, the Irish in America gained access to full whiteness by aligning themselves with anti-Blackness and the enforcement of racial hierarchies. They joined police departments, fire brigades, and political machines—institutions deeply embedded in maintaining white supremacy. In cities like New York and Boston,

Irish political leaders rose to power by delivering the votes of poor white constituents while ensuring that Black and immigrant populations remained excluded from full participation.

The turning point came during the American Civil War, when Irish workers, enraged by conscription and fearful of competition from emancipated slaves, erupted into what became the New York Draft Riots of 1863. Over several days, mobs—many of them Irish—lynched Black citizens, burned down homes and orphanages, and declared war on what they saw as the government's privileging of Black freedom over white ethnic survival. This moment marked a fateful choice: Irish solidarity with Black Americans could have been grounded in a shared experience of systemic dehumanization. Instead, whiteness became the passport to survival.

That choice had profound consequences. Over the generations that followed, Irish-Americans became enforcers of the very systems that had once oppressed them. By the 20th century, they controlled large swaths of the police, judiciary, and political machines in American cities. And rather than using that power to champion the oppressed, they too often wielded it against them. The same baton once raised by the British constable in Derry now found its match in the Irish-American officer on the streets of New York or Boston.

Theologically, this assimilation into whiteness constitutes not just a social betrayal, but a spiritual one. As theologian James Cone insisted, whiteness is not merely a skin color—it is a theological construct that justifies power, violence, and exclusion. In his *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, Cone calls for the Church—especially white churches—to confront the idolatry of racial power masked in the language of law, order, and religion. Irish Catholics in America, by choosing acceptance in exchange for silence, became complicit in this idolatry.

Theologian Jurgen Moltmann, too, speaks to this dynamic, though in different terms. In *God for a Secular Society*, he critiques societies that forget their suffering once they gain power. Where suffering is no longer remembered justice is no longer desired. The Irish in America, once defined by a dangerous memory of colonial oppression, traded that memory for the safety of forgetfulness. And in so doing, they lost the very thing that gave their presence in America its prophetic power.

This amnesia is not limited to race. It extends to empire. Having once suffered under the yoke of imperialism, Irish-Americans could have been among the fiercest critics of American militarism abroad. Instead, many became its champions—enlisting in high numbers in the U.S. armed forces, cheering on wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and

Afghanistan, and aligning themselves politically with the very nationalist, anti-immigrant rhetoric that echoes the British colonial discourse once used against them.

In Catholic theology, this assimilation must be seen as a form of social sin—a structural alignment with the forces of exclusion, domination, and violence. It is not simply a matter of individual prejudice, but a collective turning away from the Gospel's call to stand with the least, the lost, and the oppressed.

To become white in America is not merely to blend in. It is to adopt a set of moral blinders, a willful forgetting of one's own suffering, and an unspoken agreement not to question the systems that grant privilege. The Irish, whose history taught them to mistrust empire and resist domination, could have modeled a different way. Instead, they became part of the American story—not the story of liberty and welcome, but of control and silence.

## III. The Great Betrayal: Trumpism and the Irish-American Conscience

The support of many Irish-Americans for Donald Trump is not simply a political curiosity—it is a profound moral crisis. It marks the moment when a community forged in resistance to empire became, in large numbers, apologists for its modern incarnation. For those who know the history of Irish Republicanism, this alignment is not only tragic—it is unthinkable.

In Trump's political movement, Irish Republicans should have recognized the old enemy: a rhetoric of power wrapped in religious language, an appeal to blood and soil nationalism, the demonization of migrants, and the glorification of state violence. These are not abstractions—they are echoes of the very tactics once used by the British to crush Irish resistance, criminalize Republican identity, and divide working-class communities in the north of Ireland. The language of "law and order," the militarization of policing, and the use of loyalist iconography to suppress dissent all reappear under different flags in Trump's America.

And yet, across the United States, Irish surnames adorned bumper stickers that read Trump 2016/2020/2024. They marched in "Back the Blue" rallies and railed against immigrants—immigrants whose desperation mirrors their own ancestors. In some communities, Irish Catholics—

once driven by a radical theology of social justice—became vocal opponents of racial equity, LGBTQ+ rights, and refugee resettlement. Far from resisting the machinery of repression, they helped oil it.

This is the betrayal: not of party or ideology, but of memory, of solidarity, and of God.

Irish-American support for Trump is not an isolated phenomenon. In 2016 and 2020, Trump won a substantial share of white Catholic voters, particularly in the Rust Belt, where Irish heritage is common. According to Pew Research Center data, Trump received 50–52% of the Catholic vote in both elections. But these numbers obscure a deeper theological collapse: the replacement of Catholic social teaching with American civil religion, and the exchange of the Gospel's call to justice for the empty pieties of nationalism.

Christian nationalism—Trumpism's religious backbone—proclaims a Jesus who blesses borders, guns, and the flag. It is a theology of empire, dressed up as faith. It shares far more with the colonial theology of the British Empire than with the crucified Christ. Jürgen Moltmann, in *The Crucified God*, warns against any theology that aligns God with power instead of suffering: "A God who cannot suffer is a God who cannot love."

Trumpism’s God does not suffer with the oppressed—he dominates with the powerful.

Moltmann’s vision stands in direct contradiction to the American right’s nationalist religion. For Moltmann, Christian hope is not an escape from the world, nor a justification of the status quo. It is the hope of resurrection that comes only after crucifixion—hope that is forged in solidarity with the crucified peoples of the earth. In this theology, to side with the powerful is to stand on the wrong side of the cross.

The Irish should know this. The crosses of Armagh, the prisons of Long Kesh, and the graves of hunger strikers all bear witness to the cost of true solidarity. Irish Republicanism has never been a polite nationalism. It has always stood in radical tension with empire—British, American, or otherwise. Its theological undercurrent is one of liberation: a belief that peace without justice is false peace, and that the kingdom of God stands against every kingdom of this world that builds itself on blood.

James Connolly saw this clearly. He warned that an Ireland merely free in name but still shackled by capitalism and empire would be a hollow victory. So too today: Irish-America’s political influence, economic success, and cultural visibility

are not signs of moral achievement if they come at the cost of abandoning the oppressed.

Trumpism demands this abandonment. It requires the erasure of historical suffering, the denial of systemic injustice, and the replacement of communal memory with grievance-driven nostalgia. In embracing this movement, Irish-Americans betray their ancestors—not simply politically, but spiritually. They sing the songs of freedom while upholding the structures of empire. They wear the green while waving the flags of oppression. They claim the cross while rejecting the Christ it crucifies.

This betrayal must be named, not to shame, but to awaken. For there is still time to return—to remember the blood and the bread, the pain and the poetry, the Gospel that refuses to make peace with empire. To be Irish in America should never mean siding with the oppressor. It should mean standing with the broken, resisting the strong, and singing again the dangerous songs of freedom.

## IV. Between Connolly and Constantine: Christianity's Fork in the Road

The crisis facing Irish-America today is not only political, nor merely cultural. It is deeply theological. At its core lies a fundamental question that has haunted Christianity since the fourth century: Will the church walk the road of the crucified Christ, or will it follow the imperial path of Constantine?

The history of Irish resistance—especially as embodied in Republican movements—is inseparable from this question. At its most faithful, Irish Republicanism was not simply a political ideology but a theological protest: a rejection of domination, a defense of human dignity, and a vision of community shaped not by hierarchy but by shared suffering and shared hope. This vision stands in stark contrast to the Constantinian tradition that has shaped so much of Western Christianity—where the cross was transformed from a symbol of liberation into an emblem of conquest.

When Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in the 4th century and allied it with the Roman state, the church gained power—and began to lose its soul. What had been a movement of the poor, the dispossessed, and the persecuted became an imperial institution, blessing wars, legitimating emperors, and baptizing empire in the name of

Christ. This Constantinian turn marks a sharp deviation from the early church's ethic of nonviolence, communal solidarity, and prophetic witness.

James Connolly, the Irish Socialist and revolutionary executed after the 1916 Easter Rising, understood this divergence instinctively. Though not a theologian in the formal sense, Connolly's socialism was grounded in a profound moral clarity shaped by Catholic social teaching and his own immersion in working-class struggle. He saw empire and capitalism as twin forms of exploitation—structures that thrived on the dehumanization of the poor. "The working class," Connolly declared, "are the only class who dare not betray their country." For him, Irish freedom could not be separated from justice for the poor, nor could true religion be divorced from solidarity.

In Connolly's vision, Christianity stood not with the palace but with the prison cell. Not with Caesar but with the crucified. This vision echoes the theology of Jürgen Moltmann, who describes the crucifixion as God's identification with the forsaken. In *The Crucified God*, Moltmann writes, "When God becomes man in Jesus of Nazareth, he not only enters into the finitude of human existence but into its dereliction and godforsakenness." This is not a God who sanctions

empire but a God who suffers under it. In that suffering is both protest and promise.

By contrast, the Christianity that aligns itself with American nationalism—and that too many Irish-Americans have come to accept—is a reincarnation of Constantinian religion. It celebrates strength over weakness, order over justice, and patriotism over truth. It renders unto Caesar not only taxes but reverence. In this religion, the poor are blamed, the foreigner feared, and law enforcement sanctified. It is a faith that cannot abide the inconvenient witness of Connolly, or Sands, or Christ himself.

But the Irish tradition is not without its saints. Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement and of Irish descent, refused the comforts of institutional religion and chose solidarity with the poor and the imprisoned. Her spirituality was deeply Eucharistic, grounded in the radical hospitality of Jesus. She famously declared, “Don’t call me a saint. I don’t want to be dismissed so easily.” Her witness, like Connolly’s, challenges the American church—Irish or otherwise—to remember its crucified Lord, not just worship his sanitized image.

Bobby Sands, likewise, functioned as both political prisoner and theological symbol. His

hunger strike was not merely a political tactic—it was a Eucharistic act. Denied recognition as a political prisoner by the British government, Sands offered his own body in resistance. In doing so, he evoked the suffering Christ—not as passive victim, but as defiant redeemer. His famous words—“Our revenge will be the laughter of our children”—offer a theology of resurrection: not vengeance, but joy on the far side of sacrifice.

This is the fork in the road now facing Irish-America: Connolly or Constantine. Will the descendants of exiles and rebels continue to side with the powerful and forget the story that once defined them? Or will they reclaim a theology of liberation rooted in the Eucharist, the cross, and the struggle for justice?

The Gospel does not bless empire. It is the story of empire’s undoing. And the Irish, if they remember, know this story well.

## V. Memory as Resistance: The Politics of Remembering

If betrayal begins with forgetting, then resistance begins with remembering. The struggle for Irish-America's soul is not merely about political alignment or cultural identity—it is about memory. Not nostalgia, but dangerous memory. Memory that unsettles, challenges, and refuses to let empire have the final word.

In a postcolonial context, memory is not a luxury—it is a weapon. As theorist Edward Said argued in *Culture and Imperialism*, empires survive not only by violence, but by narrative control. They erase the stories of those they conquer, rewrite history from the perspective of the victor, and pacify the descendants of the oppressed with myths of inclusion. Postcolonial theology takes this seriously. It insists that the act of remembering—truthfully, painfully, politically—is itself a sacred task.

This is where the Irish in America must confront their inheritance. They are a people whose ancestors were starved by imperial policy, displaced by colonial greed, and imprisoned for demanding dignity. To remember this truth is to recall not only the suffering, but the values that shaped the response: solidarity, resistance, faith. But such memory is dangerous in a society built on forgetting. It cannot coexist easily with the

myth of American exceptionalism, or the sanitized tales of upward mobility. It disrupts the tidy assimilation story.

Johann Baptist Metz, one of the major voices in political theology, coined the term “dangerous memory” to describe this kind of remembrance—memory that threatens the status quo.

For Metz, true Christian memory recalls the crucified Christ not as abstract symbol but as historical indictment: a victim of state violence, unjust trials, and religious collaboration with power. Dangerous memory calls Christians to reorient themselves toward the forgotten, the excluded, and the crucified of every age. Faith cannot survive without the memory of suffering.

Jürgen Moltmann, following Metz, speaks of memory not as backward-looking sentiment, but as forward-driving hope. In *Theology of Hope*, he insists that true remembrance of Christ’s suffering leads not to despair but to expectation: a refusal to accept present injustice as final. To remember is to believe that resurrection is possible—not only at the end of time, but within history.

For the Irish, memory has always been more than historical record. It has been song, prayer, testimony. It has been passed down in rebel ballads and family stories, in the rosary beads smuggled into prison cells, and the murals painted

across Belfast's crumbling walls. Memory sustained the hunger striker in the H-Block. It gave voice to the mother who refused to accept her son's internment as collateral damage. It breathed through the poetry of Seamus Heaney and the speeches of Bernadette Devlin. Memory was resistance when all else failed.

But memory can fade. Especially when it becomes inconvenient. In the American context, Irish-Americans have been encouraged to remember famine, but forget who caused it. To remember immigration, but forget exclusion. To celebrate St. Patrick's Day as cultural kitsch, not political protest. The empire is comfortable with memory, so long as it is sterilized. It is the dangerous memory—the memory of British boots, of police brutality, of economic exploitation and cultural erasure—that must be kept alive.

And yet, this kind of memory can be hard to hold. Especially for communities that have "made it" in America. As Irish-Americans rose into the middle class, entered law enforcement, joined suburban parishes and Republican voter rolls, many lost the connection between their past and the present injustices faced by others. Memory decayed into sentiment. Songs became slogans. Resistance gave way to respectability.

This amnesia is not unique to the Irish. It mirrors what happened to other communities who

assimilated into whiteness. But it is especially bitter in the case of Irish-America, because the cost of forgetfulness is so high. In forgetting, they betray not only their ancestors, but those who still struggle under the same boots today: Palestinians in Gaza, migrants at the U.S. border, Black Americans facing systemic racism, Indigenous peoples fighting erasure. To remember rightly is to recover solidarity. It is to hear in the words of Bobby Sands not only an Irish protest, but a universal truth: that human dignity must never be negotiated with empire. It is to read James Connolly's writings not as quaint history, but as a prophetic rebuke to the capitalism and militarism Irish-America too often supports. It is to let the memory of crucified bodies, on crosses, in cells, in famine-struck fields, break the false peace we have come to accept. Memory is not merely about the past. It is the seedbed of revolution. And for Irish-Americans, it may be the last chance to recover who they are before it is too late.

## VI. A Way Forward: Repentance, Solidarity, and Revolutionary Faith

If Irish-America has lost its way, it is not too late to return. But return will not come through mere nostalgia or performative pride—it will require a moral reckoning. The road back must pass through repentance, solidarity, and the rediscovery of a revolutionary faith.

## Repentance: Owning the Betrayal

The first step is to name the betrayal. To acknowledge that many Irish-Americans have traded their ancestral identity as exiles and freedom fighters for the privileges of empire. This is not about collective guilt; it is about historical accountability. Repentance means confessing complicity in systems that their forebears once resisted—racism, militarism, settler colonialism, economic injustice—and rejecting those allegiances now.

It also means resisting the temptation to sanitize history. Irish-Americans must face the uncomfortable truth that many of their own supported reactionary politics, white supremacy, and anti-immigrant policies once they achieved "whiteness." Only by telling the truth can the story be redeemed. Only by walking away from empire can we walk again in the path of Connolly, Sands, and the people who filled the coffin ships.

## Solidarity: Rejoining the Struggle

The second task is to recover the spirit of solidarity—not just with Ireland, but with all those who today suffer under the heel of empire. That means standing with Palestinians under occupation. It means organizing with immigrants, laborers, prisoners, and the poor. It means rejecting the false peace offered by American

nationalism and re-joining the global struggle for human dignity.

True solidarity is costly. It may mean alienating political allies. It may mean confronting neighbors, employers, even pastors. But it is what the best of the Irish tradition demands. Connolly taught that “the cause of labor is the cause of Ireland, and the cause of Ireland is the cause of labor.” The cause of justice knows no borders. The Irish-American conscience must again be shaped by the cry of the oppressed, not the comfort of the empire.

This also means reengaging politically—not in defense of flag or nation, but in defense of the powerless. It means reviving radical Irish organizations rooted in justice, not jingoism. It means telling a different story in Irish cultural institutions, in parades, in songs. A story that reminds young Irish-Americans that their ancestors were not conquerors, but survivors. Not colonists, but rebels. And that to be faithful to that story today means standing with others who are still fighting to breathe.

## Revolutionary Faith: A Theology for the Exiled

Finally, and most crucially, this return must be theological. For the Irish struggle has never been merely political—it has always carried within it a

spiritual vision. That vision must now be reclaimed, deepened, and reimagined.

In a world dominated by capitalism and Christian nationalism, the church is often a chaplain of empire. But the Irish revolutionary tradition remembers another church—the church of the poor, of liberation theology, of suffering Christ. That tradition, rooted in the Gospels and embodied by the likes of Archbishop Óscar Romero and the Berrigan brothers, offers a path forward.

Theologically, it is time for Irish-America to rediscover exile as a sacred identity. Not as loss, but as calling. In the biblical story, exile is never the end. It is the place where God meets his people, where prophets are formed, and where empires are judged. God's future is not the continuation of the present. It is the contradiction of the present. To live faithfully as Irish-Americans now is not to defend the American status quo—it is to contradict it.

This is the future offered to Irish-America. Not one of assimilation, but of radical hope. Not a place at the imperial table, but a return to the road of the dispossessed. It is a future in which the children of survivors of genocide break bread with those still starving. A future in which memory becomes movement, faith becomes fire, and the exile once again becomes the prophet.

## Conclusion: A Fire That Cannot Be Quenched

The Irish who came to America were not merely immigrants—they were fugitives from empire. They carried with them not just grief, but a vision: a belief in a world where no people would be crushed, no voice silenced, no life deemed expendable. That vision has been obscured, but it has not died. It smolders still beneath the surface of Irish-America’s soul.

This booklet has been a call to fan that flame again. To remember who we are. To repent of what we have become. And to rise, once more, in solidarity with the crucified peoples of the world. Not out of guilt—but out of hope. Not for nostalgia—but for resurrection.

For in the words of Bobby Sands: “Everyone, Republican or otherwise has their own particular part to play. No part is too great or too small, no one is too old or too young to do something.

Let Irish-America find it's something. And let it be worthy of its name.

Tiocfaidh ar lá!